

Jason Witte

Salem Lakes Fire/Rescue

By **Jennifer Krueger**
WFJ Staff writer

A valued and respected member of the Salem Lakes Fire/Rescue Department for 20 years, the honor of being named 2020 Wisconsin State Firefighters Association Firefighter of the Year was awarded to Captain Jason Witte.

Captain Witte began his career as a volunteer with the Department in 2000, and after 11 years was awarded the opportunity to join as a full time Firefighter/Paramedic. He was then promoted to Captain, along with Training Officer after just 5 years.

“Captain Witte exceeds all of my expectations and more throughout the years he has served on the department. He puts the utmost effort into all the tasks that are given to him and the ones he seeks out as well. He is always looking for a challenge to improve on himself and others,” said Chief Mike Slover of the Salem Lakes Fire/Rescue Department.

Working as a training officer for the department, Captain Witte strives to uphold the core values of the fire department. Honor, Integrity, Compassion and Commitment are the values he believes and instills in every member.

As a training officer, he has the ability to make a considerable impact on every current, new and eager member while he is teaching the most valuable life saving practices. The selflessness and calming demeanor that he unveils



makes him one of the most trusted members of the department.

Furthering his own passion for learning, he attended the Tactical EMS and Basic SWAT training to serve alongside the Kenosha County Sheriff’s Department. The Sheriff’s department SWAT team has incredibly high standards and an equally rigorous application process. Captain Witte was one of the first chosen to participate.

In 2017 he joined the Kenosha County Tactical Response Team as a Tactical medic, and he is now an essential member of the team. He uses his training skills to help train tactical members in medical skills, providing medical support to team members and injured citizens, and expanding the capabilities of the TEMS program.

With his knowledge, he has helped to create a seamless operation between Fire/EMS and Law Enforcement operations in chaotic environments such as an Officer rescue and patient transfers. He also played a large role in the department’s Rescue Task Force training program to train fire and police personnel procedures related to active shooter scenarios.

In August of 2018 these leadership skills earned him the honor of being one of two national recipients of the “Emerging Leadership Scholarship”.

“Captain Witte is one of the strongest, most skilled paramedics in our system, and as a result, quickly has become one of its leaders. He has displayed constant professionalism, a true eagerness to better himself, and regularly sacrifices his personal needs for the betterment of the department, system as a whole, and the community Salem serves,” said Ben Feinzimer, EMS/TEMS Medical Director of Kenosha County.

He is passionate about teaching where he can make a difference. Teaching our young ones about the dangers of fire and fire prevention is important to Captain Witte. He oversees and assists with curriculum for Fire Prevention Week for the local school district. The department visits every school within the district to provide these important fire safety lessons and to show off the fire engine!

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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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One of his most important leadership roles has been with the Wisconsin Local Area Support Team (LAST), in association with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. LAST supports Wisconsin Fire Departments and their families in the event of a line of duty death of a firefighter or first responder. Serving as the Team leader, he expanded the role of LAST to also include support for fire departments with any death of a member.

“I have had an affiliation with retired Chief Steve Schreiber for many, many years as a neighboring Chief, as a member of the Fire Department Advisory Committee, LAST, and as a highly regarded friend. His involvement while Chief, and his continued involvement with LAST is most honorable. As a neighboring Chief he has always been there for answers or just the sounding board that we all need,” said Chief Gerald (Jerry) Minor of the Pittsville Fire Company. “His choice



Steve is joined by WSFA directors at his award presentation.

for the Lifetime Achievement award would be most appropriate and deserving in my opinion”

He also continues after retirement to maintain a list of any member, active or retired to ensure their service is recognized and honored at various ceremonies including the memorial service at the Wisconsin State Firefighters Association convention every spring. He volunteers on his own time, serving as a family escort on the National Fallen Firefighter

the Service Director for the Kenosha County Tactical EMS team, he worked countless hours strategically planning. He successfully coordinated a full scale TEMS operation with multiple mutual aid companies and operators, perfected procedures in the potential rescues of officers or citizens and coordinated the response to several incidents throughout the unrest. He coordinated a very large operation with multiple departments to keep a constant rotation of ambulances on standby for law enforcement officers and National Guard soldiers.

“Without his expertise during these times operations could have been much more complicated and less efficient and safe,” said Mark Ericson, Bristol Fire Department EMS Coordinator. “I could not recommend

weekend at the US Fire Administration Campus. As a family escort, he works as a guide, counselor, mentor, and compassionate assistant for the families of these fallen heroes.

“This important task has been filled by Chief Schreiber with dignity and grace to

those families who continue to lean on him for friendship and support,” said retired Christopher J. Klahn, Deputy Fire Chief with the Montello Fire Department and retired DNR Fire Management Specialist.

“His valuable contributions to the well-being of all firefighters and first responders are impressive and significant. This award is an appropriate capstone for Chief Schreiber’s career, and I can not think of a more worthy and deserving candidate.”

FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

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After each call he takes the opportunity to have a discussion with the crew, seeing it as an important learning opportunity.

An innovative training officer, and EMS service coordinator, Captain Witte leads the department with training and continuing education. He was sponsored by Gateway Technical College to attend the Blue Card Instructor training in Phoenix, Arizona in 2019. This training program provided the skills to improve the structure of the Incident Command System within the department.

In August 2020 Captain Witte played an important role in the civil unrest that took place in Kenosha. As

a stronger, driven, and hard-working firefighter/paramedic for this award. I truly rely on his wisdom and expertise to assist with everyday operations.”

The recent riots taxed the team in unparalleled fashion, and Captain Witte set an example for others during the tumultuous time.

“Captain Jason Witte is a well rounded, professional, and determined Firefighter/Paramedic that comes highly recommended from the Department for this award. The Salem Lakes Fire/Rescue Department is honored to have such a hardworking and caring individual working on our team,” said Chief Slover. “Captain Witte’s leadership and inspiring attitude will continue to move the Department in a forward direction.”